

Ontario gives London-area manufacturers, agri-food firms \$6M boost

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Ontario Economic Development Minister Vic Fedeli was in London Wednesday to announce a \$6-million boost for area manufacturers and agri-food firms. Joining him were Yoshinobu Odaira, second right, CEO of Shogun Maitake Canada, which will get \$4.5 million toward a new, \$31.2-million plant in Thames Centre, area MPP Jeff Yurek, second left, and the company's Joe Fontana. (Calvi Leon/The London Free Press)

The provincial government is pumping more than \$6 million into five London-area businesses to bolster domestic manufacturing and agri-food production.

Ontario Economic Development Minister Vic Fedeli was in London Wednesday to announce the investments, which he says will create 134 jobs and maintain 133 more.

He said the province is doling out more than \$4.5 million to Shogun Maitake Canada to support its expansion in Southwestern Ontario.

“To meet demand for this game-changing product, Shogun Maitake is building a state-of-the-art facility with new processing equipment,” Fedeli said outside the company’s food manufacturing facility Wednesday. “The increased capacity will allow this company to accelerate production and innovation, and secure (its) competitive advantage.”

The company is spending more than \$31.2 million to build a 135,000-square-foot (12,500 square metre) Thames Centre plant to process maitake mushrooms for the agri-pharm and bio-pharmaceutical industries, creating 60 jobs and retaining two others.

The mushroom can help boost people's immune systems and lower cholesterol and blood pressure, according to Yoshinobu Odaira, president and chief executive of Shogun Maitake Canada. It's in clinical trials as a potential breast and pancreatic cancer treatment.

"It's a tasty mushroom that hasn't been sold in this area," Odaira said through a translator. Southwestern Ontario "is a place people can come buy our product."

At its London facility, the company produces about 1,000 bags of mushrooms a day, each of which takes 110 to 120 days to grow. The product is shipped to restaurants in Ontario, Quebec and parts of the U.S., including Chicago and Boston, and grocers, such as No Frills and Sobeys, the company said.

The province is backing a total of nearly \$42.3 million in investments by London-area manufacturers.

The agri-food business industry is "really key," Fedeli said. "We're feeding the world out of Ontario . . . (Agriculture) is so incredibly important, and what we're really seeing a growth in is the advanced manufacturing sector that is moving agri along."

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LONDON-AREA GRANT RECIPIENTS

Shogun Maitake Canada: \$4.5 million

- Create 60 jobs, retain two positions
- Company building new, \$31.2-million plant in Thames Centre

Attica Manufacturing: \$531,000

- Install new machinery and equipment
- Add 15 jobs, retain 48 positions
- Company spending \$5.3 million-plus for new equipment and facility changes

Algonquin Bridge: \$525,000

- Creating 10 new jobs, retaining 29 positions in Thorndale
- Committing more than \$3.5 million to improvements and robotics to produce domestic products

Arva Industries: \$312,000

- Adding six jobs, retaining 49 positions
- Company spending more than \$2.1 million to expand its St. Thomas plant and buy equipment

Planet Shrimp, RAS Technologies: \$163,000

- Adding 43 jobs, retaining five positions
- Company investing nearly \$1.1 million into new processing equipment at its Aylmer plant

Source:

<https://lfpres.com/business/local-business/ontario-gives-london-area-manufacturers-agri-food-firms-6m-boost>